

**TOP FY 2000
Project Narrative**

Lincoln Action Program, Inc.

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Project Purpose: *Problem/Need.* Operation Job Support will address the need for more workers who are both dependable and trained within the Lincoln area, and the need to link residents with human services to reduce barriers to securing and retaining employment. Presently, the local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and the Nebraska Workforce Development/DoL are establishing a One-Stop Service Delivery Center and the Nebraska Explorer, an employment based web portal. Both projects provide job matching and other employment resources. Operation Job Support will establish a human services based web portal, and provide training, outreach and other support to help residents address and overcome these barriers. The following data provide a profile of the community and surrounding areas to be served by the project.

According to the 1990 Census, the city of Lincoln located in Lancaster County, Nebraska has a total population of 213,641, with a per capita income of \$23,591. The minorities comprise 7% of the population. The U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement reports that Lincoln has welcomed 2,337 refugees during the last 5 years. Catholic Social Services reports an additional 1,500 refugees have been resettled in the community since 1990. According to the Asian Community Center, "Lancaster County is the nation's 18th largest resettlement area for Amerasians; and several thousand Southeast Asian refugees were resettled during the 1980s. Many of those who have arrived in the past 5 years are considered low-income given the fact that the jobs available to them offer low wages with few benefits." Refugees also include Iraqis, Kurdish people, emigres of the former Soviet bloc countries, Bosnians, and others.

Lancaster County has a poverty rate of 10.5%. Children under age 5 experience a 14% poverty rate. Minority children experience a 36% poverty rate. As of October 1999, Nebraska Health & Human Services reported 1,174 very low-income families received Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (formerly AFDC) benefits, a 12.6% decline from the previous year. With welfare reform mandates, participation in public assistance programs such as TANF has rapidly declined. A quarterly progress report, dated April 8, 1999, submitted by the independent evaluator, Mathematica Policy Research, titled, "Evaluation of Nebraska's Welfare Reform Program," indicates that many low-income families are being dropped from the welfare rolls with few, if any, self-sufficiency services such as help with job training or support services available to them.

The 1999 Lancaster County Human Services Needs Assessment recommended development of a centralized human services information and referral system. The report stated, "The lack of a centralized information and referral system was frequently cited during this assessment process as a barrier to the efficient delivery of human services in Lincoln and Lancaster County." The assessment also indicated the importance of securing a job that pays a living wage. The report stated, "If individuals are unable to obtain employment that pays them a living wage, they will be unable to break the cycle of poverty."

In addition to the many needs among low-income families and others, local business growth is booming. Lincoln has an unemployment rate of 2.6% as of January 2000. As a result, many businesses are experiencing difficulty filling positions.

Saunders County will also be targeted by the project. The Census reports that Saunders County is rural and has a population of 18,716. The county lies between Nebraska's two largest

urban areas of Omaha and Lincoln. Saunders County has a 9.6% poverty rate among children, has an unemployment rate of 3.4%, and a per capita income of \$11,115. A recent assessment stated, "Very few resources exist in Saunders County for adults and children to access education. Transportation is imperative to families if resources outside the county are to be used." Accessing employment and human service resources entails long drives outside the county.

The following is a brief review of the problems and needs to be addressed by this proposal:

- 1) Local employers need trained, dependable workers;
 - 2) The WIB needs to link workers with human services addressing barriers to securing and retaining employment;
 - 3) Lancaster County, an urban area, needs a centralized information and referral system to enhance the efficient delivery of human services and reduce barriers to securing and retaining a job;
 - 4) Saunders County, a rural area, possesses unique barriers such as long distances and lack of transportation to access employment and human services;
 - 5) Low-income families, particularly those leaving the welfare rolls, need improved access to employment and human services;
 - 6) Refugees possess unique barriers such as lack of English language proficiency when accessing employment and human services;
 - 7) Many minorities and low-income families possess unique barriers such as lack of computer skills, Internet access and more when accessing employment and human services;
 - 8) People with disabilities experience barriers when accessing employment and human services.
- Solution.*

To address these needs, LAP proposes a 3-year technology project called Operation Job Support. The project will complement the local WIB's One-Stop Service Delivery Center and DoL's Nebraska Explorer projects. The project will utilize emerging and existing technologies – broadband, wireless and the Internet -- to help all residents of Lancaster and Saunders counties access human services helping them to secure and retain jobs. To reduce the impact of the digital divide, the project will particularly target the needs of very low-income families, minorities, refugees and other immigrants, and persons with disabilities. Operation Job Support is a multilevel, community wide partnership between business and human services. The project will establish a human services based web portal to address barriers to employment such as lack of child care, transportation, English proficiency, and more. The web portal will be interactive in nature, providing on-line needs assessment, referral, GED and English as a second language training, and more. Other activities include: web portal training to all human service workers in Lancaster and Saunders counties; computer skills training for very low-income persons and others; partnering the project with the Lincoln/Lancaster County Human Services Federation's (HSF) Technology Project which will provide computers, software and support to all human service agencies in the county; assisted access including touch screen computers, screen reading and translation programs; in-home access and training for those with disabilities or limited English proficiency; information and referral; ensured confidentiality of participants; and strong collaboration.

Outcomes. The human services based web portal will address our community's lack of workers by specifically addressing the barriers that reduce or eliminate many workers' successful participation

in the labor market. Often, workers are unable to secure or retain jobs due to easily addressed needs such as lack of child care, transportation, GED or English proficiency. Through the innovative use of technology, the web portal will help both employers and workers overcome these barriers. The web portal will provide a centralized information and referral system that will employ an on-line needs assessment tool. Barriers such as distance and lack of transportation in rural areas will be overcome by use of electronic communication linking people with needed jobs and services. Low-income families, minorities, refugees and persons with disabilities will be able to access needed self-sufficiency services, including on-line GED and ESL instruction. The digital divide and barriers to securing and retaining a job will be significantly reduced by offering computer skills training and Internet access at more than 40 minority and neighborhood based centers throughout the 2 county area. The One-Stop Center will become more accessible to those with language barriers and disabilities. For more details regarding anticipated project outcomes, refer to the Logic Model (Appendix 1, page 9) and the Evaluation section (page 8.)

Innovation: Operation Job Support builds upon the lessons learned from previous TIIAP initiatives. The following lessons were gleaned from the evaluation report prepared for the U.S. Department of Commerce, February 1999. Following each lesson is a brief explanation of how our project incorporates these lessons.

Lesson 1: Establishing & maintaining partnerships was valuable, yet demanding.

Operation Job Support has identified more than 20 committed partnerships which are evidenced by the attached letters outlining their role in the project, their in-kind commitment, and their willingness to send representatives to an advisory council, meeting on a quarterly throughout the project.

Lesson 2: Few of the 1994 and 1995 TIIAP projects invested the staff or financial resources needed to collect valid and reliable impact data.

Operation Job Support has involved a third-party, independent evaluator at the outset of developing its proposal. As a result, a viable evaluation has been developed that will measure the impact of the project and community benefits, and will help provide data and lessons learned to the rest of the nation. We are confident that the evaluation component will help improve implementation, and will result in a project model that can be replicated throughout the country.

Lesson 3: Insufficient planning posed the greatest obstacle to implementation.

Operation Job Support has involved the community in development of the project. Of particular importance is the strong role the local Workforce Investment Board with 57 representatives from business and the public sector played in the planning process. Numerous meetings with partnering organizations, as well as the commitment of elected officials and the leveraging of significant in-kind support took place. Planning has resulted in a realistic implementation schedule.

Lesson 4: Successful demonstration and access projects shared a set of common traits.

Operation Job Support shares these traits: Our project will serve the greatest number of community

residents by making all human services available via the Internet. The problem – the need for services supporting the obtaining and retaining of jobs -- we seek to address is well-defined and can be addressed through technological means. The project involves elected officials and community leaders who can bring about change to resolve problems.

Lesson 5: Lack of maintenance funding was the chief threat to project sustainability.

Operation Job Support has secured a substantial in-kind and cash match, which will translate into sustained support as the project proves its worth. Additionally, LAP is committed to maintaining the web-portal, and will assume any ongoing costs, if necessary.

Lesson 6: Lack of community assessment for the need of a technology project resulted in underutilization of the project.

Operation Job Support has reviewed several existing community needs surveys and held numerous meetings with stakeholders to determine the need for a human services based web-portal. As a result, we are confident that the web portal will be utilized by the One-Stop Center, all human service agencies, business partners, and very low-income families and others targeted for services. The project corresponds to several identified community goals, particularly for a centralized information and referral system for human services.

Operation Job Support possesses several innovative aspects. They include: 1) On-line, interactive needs assessment, while ensuring confidentiality, leading to appropriate referral and provision of services; 2) Utilization of emerging wireless technology to provide in-home access to the Operation Job Support and Nebraska Explorer web portals by trained human services outreach staff; 3) Utilization of broadband technology to provide on-line GED and ESL training modules to under-served communities; 4) Universal access and computing among the 80+ member organizations of the Lancaster County Human Services Federation; 5) Partnering with our local WIB to create a unique project helping residents get jobs and address the barriers limiting job retention; 6) Furthering public interest networking between business and human services to help foster a more equitable community while reducing the digital divide; and 7) Developing a nationally replicable project model bringing together business and human services to match people with jobs and help them retain them.

Diffusion Potential: Operation Job Support is particularly well-suited for national dissemination and replication. The project addresses the pressing needs of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Passed by Congress in 1998, the Act requires each state and locality to develop a centralized system of job matching, employment resources, and more. The Act has six primary goals: Streamline employment services; Empower individuals in seeking employment; Provide universal access to jobs, employment and economic data; Increase accountability among service providers; Promote local/private involvement; and Promote state/local flexibility. The intent is to help employers get the workers they need, and help workers secure the jobs they need. A critical missing element to WIA is the need for services that address the barriers limiting workers' ability to secure and retain employment. Operation Job Support addresses this missing element by providing on-line needs assessment, appropriate referral and provision of services, and access to basic job-readiness training.

It is anticipated that once the project proves itself that communities across the nation will want to replicate the project in their locality, thus, strengthening the goals of the WIA nationally. Unemployment rates in many regions are at all time lows (national unemployment rate was 4.1% in December 1999), making it difficult for employers to secure workers. Additionally, welfare reform mandates, passed both nationally and locally, are significantly reducing the welfare rolls. Poverty is a pervasive problem in our country, exacerbated by the digital divide. Hence, it is important that the opportunities for more efficient delivery of services presented by emerging and existing technologies be explored, refined and replicated.

The project builds upon existing technological networks and can be easily replicated throughout the nation with a minimal investment in hardware and software. By partnering with each community's local WIB, community based organizations may be able to tap into private sector financial support to develop their human services based web portal. Developing a human services web portal particularly targets the needs of under-served communities, while bridging barriers such as distance and accessibility.

Dissemination. LAP will present the project model and evaluation results to national and regional conferences for the nation's Workforce Investment Boards, National Association of Community Action Agencies (NACAA) of which there are more than 1,000 members, at professional conferences for human service workers, at our statewide conference for the Association of Nebraska Community Action Agencies (ANCAA), through publication in professional journals such as the Public Welfare published by the American Public Welfare Association, and by placing our project model and evaluation results on our web-site. LAP would be willing to provide training and mentorship of other project sites throughout the country. To further dissemination goals, we will publish a project replication manual for distribution to at least 100 other human service organizations.

Project Feasibility: *Technical Approach.* One NT Server with Backoffice Suite will be purchased to house the web portal. Backoffice Suite is more costly than the Internet Information Server, but would possess more capabilities and be less likely to need to be upgraded within a year. Dell or Compaq networked computers with touch screens will be purchased for the One-Stop Center and several of community access centers (CACs). To ensure that the monitor is the same brand, and thus functions well with the computer, LAP will opt for a software upgrade package. One printer will be purchased for each CAC that is being supplied a computer.

The HSF Technology Project will match Operation Job Support with \$200,000 to purchase approximately 100 computers, printers and Internet access for 25 to 40 human service agencies, community centers, and minority-based centers. The intent is to make each human service agency and community center in the city of Lincoln technologically current. Both projects complement and strengthen each other, making universal access a reality for low-income, minority and differently abled communities.

After review of the market, it has been determined to purchase Micron laptop computers that have a good track record for reliability. Jaws for Windows, a visually impaired screen reader, will be purchased for the One-Stop Center and other CACs. Jaws for Windows was recommended by

technical staff at the Nebraska Commission for the Visually Impaired. Language translator software called Systran Professional will be purchased for use at the One-Stop Center and CACs. Touch monitors will be brought into several additional CACs by purchasing upgrade software. Operation Job Support will provide several of these upgrades to help lessen the intimidating effect that computers have on some participants. MicroSoft Office 2000 software will come with the computers. Netscape, which can be obtained free of charge, will be utilized. The NT Server will come with the necessary software.

The technology recommended for this project is Asymmetrical Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL.) (Refer to Appendix 3 for diagram.) DSL technology delivers digital information over ordinary copper telephone lines. Asymmetric refers to the fact that the downstream (to the user) channel can outweigh the upstream (to the network) channel by a ratio as high as 20:1. This asymmetry is a good fit for remote Local Area Network (LAN) access and Internet access applications where the paradigm is a small request up to the network and a large delivery to the user.

ADSL requires a special router/modem at the end user's premise. It connects to an Ethernet card in the PC. From the router, a telephone line runs into the wall jack. An in-line filter may be needed before a telephone has a "seashell" noise when talking on the phone. The other equipment necessary to provide ADSL service resides at ALLTEL's, the phone company, Central Office. (Refer to Appendix 4 for diagram.)

ADSL uses Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM) for its backbone network, a protocol that packs digital information into cells that are switched throughout a network over virtual circuits. Its ability to accommodate multiple types of media (voice, video and data) makes it a player for full service networks based on ADSL.

ADSL is the chosen technology for this project for the following reasons: *1) Higher connection speeds at a cost-effective price.* In Nebraska, ALLTEL offers speeds up to 1.02Mbps (Megabits per second) for a monthly rate of \$119.75. A dedicated Frame Relay Services (FRS) T1 (1.5Mbps) connection can cost \$450 per month. Internet access through ADSL at a speed of 1.02Mbps has a monthly rate of \$175.50. Internet access over a dedicated FRS T1 can cost \$700 per month. *2) Uses existing copper facilities.* ADSL uses the current telephone line to provide simultaneous data and voice communication. With ADSL, a telephone conversation and Internet access can occur at the same time without conflict or reduction in speed. *3) Always on connectivity.* Current dial-up Internet services require the user to "make a call" to the Internet Service Provider (ISP.) The connection is only active during the duration of the call. ADSL enables the connection to be always on in a fashion similar to a LAN.

Security issues will be of paramount concern and will be addressed by the Web Master as the web portal is developed. Virtual Private Networking security software is being considered. Every effort will be made to ensure the confidentiality of each participant. (Refer to pages 424A 1 - 28, the budget and budget narrative for details.) *Interoperability.* ADSL is an IP-only solution. IP is Internet Protocol, a standard describing software that keeps track of the Internetwork addresses for different nodes, routes outgoing messages, and recognizes incoming messages. With the growth of the Internet, most applications are IP-based. ALLTEL ADSL meets the standards adopted by the

International Telecommunications Union (ITU) of G.Lite, known as G.992.2.

Operation Job Support will possess interoperability, allowing the system to be used with other networks. In particular, the project will dovetail the Nebraska Explorer project sponsored by the Nebraska Workforce Development/DoL. Additionally, the system will be integrated with DoL's Nebraska Workforce Assessment System (NWAS) which will automatically flag pertinent human service agencies such as LAP when a participant is in need of job support services. The project will not pursue closed or proprietary solutions since the project is intended to enhance access, not limit it. Additionally, the project builds upon existing networks and readily available information and referral resources. To ensure that the comprehensive human services information and referral system (IRIS) is incorporated in the project, the grant will cover initial licensing costs required by the company.

Technical Alternatives. Other technologies that could be utilized for this project include FRS, Integrated Digital Services Network (IDSN), and business lines with Internet dial access. FRS is a private network solution that requires dedicated circuits to each location. While a viable option, it is not as cost-effective as ADSL. If the application was mission-critical, FRS would be a good alternative to ADSL. IDSN Basic Rate Interface (BRI) is a digital technology that provides two channels, 64Kbps each (Kilobits per second), for communication. The two channels can be bonded together for a maximum speed of 128Kbps. Each channel can carry voice or data, so you can talk on one channel and access the Internet on the other. This type of service would be used in conjunction with FRS at the server location. IDSN is not available in Saunders County at this time. It can be used as a stand-alone or to supplement ADSL service in Lincoln. The monthly cost is more than the proposed ADSL service cost to each location. A business line with dial access to the Internet is another way of providing this service at a low cost. This type of service would be used in conjunction with FRS at the server location. The downside to this solution is speed and reliability. Dial access would provide a maximum of 56Kbps. The quality of the copper facilities and the availability of the modem access can effect reliability.

Scalability. ADSL requires a telephone line for service; therefore, the ability to increase the service is limited to the demand in an area. ADSL is available in Lincoln as well as other cities in the ALLTEL operating area. There are pockets where ADSL service is unavailable, but ALLTEL is addressing those issues at this time. Wahoo, the largest town in Saunders County, is scheduled to have ADSL service in the third quarter of 2000. ALLTEL has plans to continue expanding ADSL service throughout their operating territory as well as other markets in Nebraska. ADSL is a platform from which other services can be offered, e.g., video on demand, additional voice services. These technologies are relatively new and are still in development.

Hence, the project possesses excellent scalability potential. It is anticipated that through effective marketing to both employers and workers that the number of users in the community will increase dramatically during the course of the project. Additionally, LAP will add more services to the web portal, and will strongly consider taking the project statewide for replication.

Maintaining the System. Upgrades and maintenance of ADSL as a service are the responsibility of

ALLTEL. The end user equipment, the ADSL router, has a life expectancy of three years, minimum. Software upgrades to the router should be all that is required in maintaining the equipment.

Once the system has proven its value, LAP is confident that maintenance funds to cover project oversight and updates to the web portal will be easily leveraged through the local United Way and other local resources. If independent funding is not initially secured, LAP will commit to maintaining the web portal.

Applicant Qualifications. LAP possesses a successful track record in serving very low-income and minority communities. This is evidenced through the successful implementation of 8 federally funded demonstration partnership projects. The agency possesses a state-of-the-art networking system within its own organization and has successfully operated a Computer Learning Lab teaching a range of computer skills for more than 5 years. The project team will be comprised of LAP Executive Director Beatty Brasch, a Project Director, Network Access Specialists, Data Collection Specialist, a contracted Web Master, a contracted Trainer, the technical support of ALLTEL's Engineering Department, NE Assistive Technology Partnership, the NE Commission for the Visually Impaired, the NE Career Information System, and the NE Workforce Development/DoL (See appendices for resumes, job descriptions, and commitment letters.)

ALLTEL implemented ADSL service in Nebraska on April 5, 1999. The equipment vendor, Cisco, relied on ALLTEL engineering resources to provide comments on the product that was selected. Improvements were made by Cisco based on ALLTEL recommendations. ALLTEL's Nebraska experience in releasing ADSL has been varied and has been extended to all of ALLTEL's ADSL market areas. ALLTEL engineers have experience working with a variety of technologies including FRS, ATM, LANs, WANs, ADSL, ISDN, private lines and Internet. This experience extends to the equipment and protocols a customer may use. Many of ALLTEL's engineers have certification from Cisco and other vendors to work with their product.

Budget, Implementation Schedule and Timeline. The pricing for the service is described in the budget narrative. Implementation for this service can be accomplished within a month or less, depending upon current demands. Please refer to pages 424A 1 -28 for the project budget and narrative. Considering the scope of the proposed project and the match, Operation Job Support's budget is both reasonable and sound. Please refer to Appendix 2, page 10 for the timeline, which sets forth realistic milestones which can be accomplished within the allotted time.

Community Involvement: *Partnerships & Community Involvement.* LAP held a series of meetings starting with our local WIB to ascertain the need and commitment of community stakeholders. During these meetings, the WIB and its Youth Council played an instrumental role in developing and planning Operation Job Support. To gather information from the low-income community, LAP reviewed its annual needs survey conducted among the nearly 2,000 low-income households served by the agency. Additional needs information and help with planning the project were gathered through meetings with the NE Workforce Development, ALLTEL and Saunders County human service agencies and community leaders.

LAP has leveraged the commitment and support of more than 20 organizations and elected

officials. Their continued commitment will be ensured through a project advisory council meeting quarterly throughout the project. Please refer to the Table of Contents for a listing of these partners and the page numbers of their letters explaining their role in the project, their in-kind commitment and their relationship with LAP previous to this proposal. As the letters of commitment indicate, Operation Job Support will involve the community and its stakeholders. Project partners will assist LAP in ensuring each participants' privacy, and numerous measures are being taken to serve people with disabilities. The project will receive ongoing participant feedback and evaluation by administering the Family Development Assessment Tool on-line, as well as during 6-month follow-up assessments to determine the effectiveness of services. LAP will also include Operation Job Support in its annual community needs survey to elicit evaluation from participants.

Support for End-Users. End-users of the Operation Job Support web portal will be employers, workers, human services workers, very low-income families, minorities, refugees, and people with disabilities. A marketing plan with information and guidance on how to use the web portal will be developed targeting employers and workers. A comprehensive training program will be provided by Network Access Specialists, who will train human service workers throughout the 2 counties. LAP will directly market the web portal to its more than 2,000 very low-income households, which include minorities, refugees, and people with disabilities. All LAP participants and other eligible residents will be encouraged to use LAP's Computer Learning Lab to gain computer skills. In addition to above mentioned representatives to the project advisory council, LAP will recruit 2 representatives from low-income, minority and differently abled communities to serve on the council to ensure their involvement in the project.

The following is a brief description of how the Operation Job Support web portal will function: Jose is a Hispanic worker at a meat processing plant, is a hard worker and provides for his family as best he can. Though his employer has been satisfied with his work over the last 2 years, he is frustrated by Jose's limited English and recently he has come to suspect that Jose may be having serious problems at home causing him to miss work. Instead of dismissing Jose, his employer accesses the Operation Job Support web-portal by using his computer in his office. There, he finds on-line services for ESL training and an assessment tool that can help Jose address his family problems. Jose's employer encourages him to go to the nearest One-Stop Service Delivery Center to access a computer and these services. At the Center, Jose discovers that the initial on-line forms are translated into Spanish, are easy to complete with the touch-screen computers, and the simplified assessment tool will send his name and phone number, with his permission, to the Hispanic Community Center. In turn, the Hispanic Center calls Jose's home the following day to make an in-home appointment with an outreach worker, who helps Jose access services by using the web portal. In the end, Jose's family problem, an elderly member of the family, is identified as an Alzheimer's patient and receives adult day care services. Jose and his family receive on-line ESL tutoring and are referred to free one-on-one ESL and computer training at a neighborhood center. Jose's English improves, as does his job attendance. The employer is helped by being able to retain a good worker.

Privacy. The protection of the privacy of participants will be critical to the success of Operation Job Support. A Web Master will be hired on a consulting basis to establish the web-portal. Part of the Web Master's duties will be to build in security into the web-portal.

Reducing Disparities: *Description & Documentation of Disparities.* According to the *Falling Through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide* report, urban households with incomes above \$75,000 and higher are more than 20 times more likely to have Internet access than rural households at the lowest income levels, and more than 9 times as likely to have a computer at home. Whites are more likely to have Internet access from home than Blacks or Hispanics have from any location. It is important to note that CACs play a crucial role in providing access to computers and the Internet among lower income and minority households. In Nebraska, 95.8% of all households have a phone, 42.9% have a computer and 22.9% use Internet access. Nebraska falls in the middle range compared to other states except for Internet usage, which lags behind other states.

On a local level, LAP reviewed currently available CACs. Library sites throughout the city and Lancaster County serve as points of entry. These sites are well used to the point of a backlog. Each evening the library administers a waiting list for Internet access and computer usage. Individuals, including many young students, are limited to a half hour of Internet access. Many do not get to use the computers or access the Internet causing a disadvantage when seeking jobs, completing homework and other typical activities. Other access sites are available through LAP's Computer Learning Lab and some community centers. A recent survey by HSF's Technology Project indicated that approximately half of the human service agencies and minority based community centers have up-to-date computers with Internet access. Since Lincoln is a "college town," most Internet users utilize access and computers to complete their studies and to secure jobs. The rural nature of Saunders County has caused greater disparities. There are few, if any CACs, and no outreach to low-income minorities of which Hispanics comprise the majority.

Strategies for Overcoming Barriers to Access. Universal access is critical to ensuring that lower income and minority households can obtain the same employment, education, training, and human services as higher income and white households. Hence, Operation Job Support will not only establish a human services based web portal, but will provide comprehensive training of its use to human service workers, employers and participants. Disparities in computer and Internet access, and computer literacy will be addressed by the project's commitment to provide computers to human service agencies, by implementing translation, screen reading and touch screens in the One-Stop Center and four other CACs, by utilizing wireless technology bringing access into the homes of the differently abled and limited English families, by offering access to training in LAP's Computer Learning Lab, and by offering

GED and ESL training on-line. These support services will afford all residents access to computers and the Internet, opportunities for computer skills training, training on how to use the web portal, and accessibility options (screen reading programs, etc.) in frequently used CACs.

Evaluation & Documentation: Outcome Evaluation Questions - Where are low-income and minority individuals in the WIA on the digital divide continuum? Do the services provided by Operation Job Success decrease the digital divide among participants? Do Operation Job Success participants find employment and reduce barriers to employment more quickly than non-participants? What barriers and pathways around barriers to the digital divide and finding employment exist for the target population?

Evaluation Strategy and Data Collection: Evaluation strategies proposed to address the project questions combine process and outcome evaluations in a multi-method assessment. The process evaluation or documentation of Operation Job Support will combine quantitative data, to include data on access, use and service provision in each of the project goal areas, with qualitative data that will provide a richer contextual history of the implementation and experiences of clients served. Preliminary evaluation plans for the process evaluation include beyond the standard measures of the implementation of project activities includes an in-depth journaling of the Operation Job Support project by selected clients on their experience. Journals will also be maintained by the Network Access specialists to capture the full impact of their experiences with clients as they encounter the digital divide together. The hope for this journaling activity will be to provide unique insights to the barriers and the paths around those barriers clients attempt and those they find successful. The rich data derived from these sources it is hoped will prove extremely helpful in furthering technology-applied programs and specifically as the digital divide is encountered within the context of Workforce Investment Act.

The outcome evaluation of Operation Job Support will address in a more typical fashion the evaluation questions. One element of the outcome evaluation focuses on issues related to the digital divide and how Operation Job Support successfully bridges this gap for project clients. The first step of this process includes developing or adapting a scale to measure sub-components of the digital divide including Internet, ability and access. We will measure clients' position along the digital divide at program entry and a post assessment after exiting the program. This assessment we hope will provide much needed, grounded data on the extent and variability of the digital divide among the client population; will provide an assessment of the program ability to move clients across the divide and an assessment of how the starting point on the continuum may impact success in becoming economically self-sufficient. The second element of the outcome evaluation will be a comparison of Operation Job Support clients to a demographically similar population in seeking and obtaining employment.

Data Analysis: Analyses of process data will be primarily descriptive in terms of program implementation and use. The analyses of the journaling component will be conducted in two ways; first a rich historical record of selected clients will be used and secondly standard ethnographic data analyses tools such as NUDIST and ETHNOGRAPH will be utilized to distill common elements and themes from the journals of clients and network specialists. Quantitative analyses assessing aspects of the digital divide will include standard means tests and analysis of variance. Additionally the data may be sufficient to conduct some regression-based analyses of the successful outcome of finding employment on where clients begin the program along the digital divide continuum. Analyses of the comparison group outcome element will also uses analysis of variance and basic mean tests to establish program effect.

Evaluator: The primary investigator of the evaluation will be Jeff M. Chambers, Research Manager at the Center on Children, Families and the Law. (Vita in Appendix 31, page 40) The evaluation staff will also include Allison Hopp, System Administrator at the Center on Children, Families and the Law. Allison has experience in the provision and evaluation of technology assisted human service programs having worked on the TIAP funded IDEAS projects in Nebraska.